



**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES**  
**Institute for Youth, Education, and Families**

*Building Public Will: Promoting Citizen Engagement to Improve Your City's Schools*  
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*GRADY:* Thank you and good afternoon, everyone. My name is Michael Grady and I am the deputy director of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, here at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. I am very happy to welcome you all to this web seminar on education, which is sponsored by the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities, one of our partner organizations, and it is also hosted as part of National City Network's focus on back to school month, this September.

Those of you who do not know the Annenberg Institute, we are a national reform support organization. We have operated for about 14 years here at Brown. Our mission is to promote quality education and we do that in working partnerships with public school districts and other supporting organizations such as the National League of Cities. We also work with civic and community organizations as well. Our work takes on a number of forms - we provide technical support to districts or networks of districts, mostly urban districts and community and civic organizations. We also host national conferences, conduct research and policy analysis, and we publish tools and reports, and one of those publications is the basis of our seminar today. I am delighted to be joined by two individuals that I have had the pleasure of knowing now for about five years. First, I would like to welcome my colleague, Marc Hill. Marc is the director of the Mayor's Office of Children and Youth in the City of Nashville, Tenn. Welcome, Marc.

*HILL:* Thanks, Michael. It is great to be here today.

*GRADY:* And I believe that we are still awaiting the arrival of Maria Guajardo.

*OPERATOR:* That's correct.

*GRADY:* She is the executive director of the Mayor's Office of Education and Children in the City of Denver, Colorado. So, Maria will be joining us in a few minutes. In the meantime, I just wanted to note that Marc and Maria were a huge help in getting my colleagues and I the kind of access we needed to leaders in their two cities, which allowed us to produce the publications that we will be discussing today and, I hope, provide it as a resource to those of you who are facing challenges around building public will and support for quality schools in your cities. I also welcome all of our listeners. I am told that we are joined by a large group of community leaders and educators in St. Louis, which I am happy to hear. St. Louis, Marc knows this, is my birth place. For those locals, I grew up on the 5900 block of Pershing, in the West End and my family still lives in the area, so I commend all of you for working so hard on behalf of public schools in my hometown and Marc, I have a feeling that Robin Wahby is probably at the bottom of this in St. Louis. Robin has been a great colleague of ours.

*HILL:* I hope so, and Michael I do not want to interrupt your presentation, but I have to mention also, for the record, that I was born in St. Louis.

*GRADY:* There you go. We are double teaming you. This is practically a random sample here. So, there you go. Robin does good work for the National League of Cities and makes St. Louis proud and does St. Louis proud in that respect. Let me start with a couple of quick logistical notes. The first one being that I hope that no one is experiencing technical difficulties, logging on today. NLC does highly recommend that you listen through your computer speakers, but if you prefer to listen over the phone, simply call the toll free number, which is at the bottom of each of the slides. We put a footer with the toll free number and then the verbal pass code, which is National League of Cities. So, if you prefer to listen in by using your phone that is the procedure. As a last resort, if you are having technical difficulties, you can call Bobbye Vechik at NLC and her number is 202-626-3049. You might want to write that down, in case the screen goes blank at any point in the next hour.

The format today for our call is straightforward. Maria, Marc and I will open with a presentation, which will roughly follow the Power Point presentation on the screen in front of you. We will then discuss a number of questions, which we have already received from the National League of Cities. Those will get us started. Then about halfway through the call, at around 4:30 Eastern Time, we would invite you to submit your questions and to do so by using the Live Meeting application on your computer. In the bottom, there is a window and you can just go ahead and type in your question there and click the "Ask" button and that will put your question in a queue and we will do our best to get to as many of these as possible.

Let's go first to the basic facts on the web seminar panel. As I mentioned, I am deputy director at the Annenberg Institute. I have introduced Marc Hill. Let me check to see, is Maria with us yet?

*LUCERO:* Yes, I am here thank you.

*GRADY:* Ah, Maria – welcome. Maria is the executive director of the Mayor's Office of Education and Children in Denver, and she is obviously a very busy person and we are very happy, Maria, that you have made the call today.

*LUCERO:* Absolutely, my pleasure.

*GRADY:* Then I also include information on this first slide, if you are interested in downloading a copy of the report, you can do that, by accessing our web site, the publication section of our website (<http://www.annenberginstitute.org/publications/index.html>). That link there will take you right to the report. If you would like to order a print copy, there is a publication and that link will take you to the publication form. If you have any questions about anything that you hear today, then you are welcome to contact me directly and that is my e-mail address ([Michael\\_Grady@brown.edu](mailto:Michael_Grady@brown.edu)).

The next slide – I think we are all former educators, in one way or another and we start out with the objectives for our class today – and they are simple ones. The first is to provide you with some basic background information on the *Engaging Cities* project and the report. It will give you quick capsule summaries of the five stories, from the featured cities and then inviting Marc and Maria, as part of that, to go a little bit deeper into their work in Nashville and Denver, respectively. And then point out to you some of the common elements that we have teased out from our review of the five case studies that you might find helpful in your local planning, and then finally, as I said, we will leave plenty of time for audience questions and discussion.

First, a little bit about the purpose of the *Engaging Cities* project, and why we did this work and why we did this in partnership with the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at NLC. Part of this is mission related; community and civic engagement, is really one of the three pillars of our work here at Annenberg and it is essential to the work of the National League of Cities Institute as well. The second reason is that we received increasing requests and calls for support around public engagement from all sectors: municipal leaders, community organizations, higher education, etc., and so we felt it was time to provide some kind of supportive set of resources that inform those efforts. Another reason is the emerging role of mayors in public education over the past decades. Obviously, the take-overs or partial take-overs that we have read about in Chicago, Boston, and New York, and other places have gotten a lot of the headlines. We do feature New York in this volume, but there are other cities; the other four cities, where the mayors in those cities have anywhere from moderate to weak formal authority over education. Nonetheless, they have been real forces for change and we wanted to document some of those cases. And then finally, we wanted to point out what we think are some of the high-yield strategies that have been used both in these five cities, as well as others that we have picked up in our national work.

So the last 17 pages of the report are dedicated to a collection of web links and thumbnail descriptions of strategies that you all might find helpful and you can download them as well from the web site. Very quickly on the study features, this is a basic case study research method. We selected the five cities. There was no super technical way of doing it. We basically just asked all of the organizations and all of the individuals that know the most about promising work, fine municipal leaders, in cities, on behalf of schools and that led us to these five and you can see that we just use standard sources of data, which are typical in case study research.

Now, let's start off with Akron. The basic format that we will follow here is that I will do a quick recap of the Akron and Long Beach stories and then ask Maria to talk about Denver. She will send it back to me and I will do a debriefing on New York. Marc will handle Nashville and then we will move to some of the common elements. So, let's start with Akron. If there is anyone on the line from Ohio – you are probably familiar with the work of the Ohio Schools Facilities Commission. That commission was funded. It had authority to distribute \$23

billion in resources and about half of that amount was made up of Ohio's share of the tobacco settlement.

So, the state of Ohio made the decision to dedicate the \$23 billion to rebuild aging schools throughout the state. The districts were required to raise a match and their match ran anywhere from 40-60% of this state contribution and in Akron, they tried twice to raise taxes, in order to raise their roughly \$400 million share of the match. The first attempt was a county-wide sales tax, which failed, mainly because of resistance outside of Akron and six months later, led by Mayor Don Plusquellic, they went back to the polls and approved a city-wide income tax. So, they completely changed how they would raise the revenue. That passed by a wide margin, in large measure due to Mayor Plusquellic's efforts. He really led the charge on that. One stipulation of the tax code, in order to use income tax proceeds for capital improvement, the funds had to be used to build or repay with a law called "Community Learning Centers."

So, what Akron did is that they set out to transform their schools into hubs of community learning and hubs of community life, and that led to the collaboration, once the program was funded, that led to the creation of a number of new collaborative bodies to implement the program. The first one being a cities-schools partnership, where the representatives of city government and city council teamed up with school leadership and that collaborative was responsible for overseeing the allocation of funds for school construction. Even more powerful – some of the partnerships at the local community level where community-based providers and organizations that had a specific interest in a neighborhood would team up in order to do program planning for the community learning centers over the course of a year and a half to two years. They would actually lay out of the program based on local interest needs and priorities and that included a full range of supports, running from early childhood services to extended learning opportunities in health and social services.

I want to read, just very briefly, from the report, which is the superintendent, Sylvester Small's quote, when asked how he will judge the success of the CLC, what they call the CLC initiative, five years out, he offers these thoughts. "First, I want the learning centers to be fully utilized from morning until night for programs that address the community's priorities. Second, I will look for community pride in ownership of that building, so that not only parents of students, but other members of the community are taking full advantage of what they have to offer and, finally, I want the narrow concept of school to disappear all together. These should truly be centers of community life and learning in every sense of the word." So, that really captures, in many respects the power of the Akron story.

In Long Beach, the partnership was really born out of economic and social crisis in the early 1990s. There were a series of shipyard closings and, I believe, McDonald-Douglas also closed a manufacturing center in Long Beach. There were incidences of racial unrest and gang violence and what that did was cause Ernie Kell, who was the mayor at the time, to respond to this crisis by forming a city-wide task force to look at the problem and one of the products of this was the formal and permanent partnership between the city schools and the three local higher education institutions, to promote what they call the seamless education system that spans from kindergarten through Grade 16. The two hallmarks of that, the first is that the graduation requirements of the local high school would be entrance expectations of success for freshman in college and what that amounted to was having professors of freshman English, for example, plan side by side with their high school English teacher colleagues. The other priority that was addressed through this was teacher training and some changes were made at the largest teacher preparation program in the city to better prepare new teachers to succeed in urban settings.

Mayor Beverly O’Neill, who succeeded Mayor Kell, has been the champion of the seamless partnership and she is really a natural for this because she is the past president of Long Beach City College. I will pause now and ask Maria Guajardo Lucero from Denver, to talk to us about the Denver work.

*LUCERO:* Well, thank you. In Denver, the role of municipal leadership has been very visible and very palpable here in the city. Mayor Hickenlooper has been in office for three years and campaigned on an education platform from preschool through opening and creating more access to higher education. So, as part of our conversation in this city and truly I use that word very intentionally, the role was to help identify, or help define the role of a municipality in supporting and advancing the education of the city. So, one example of that work was to look towards advancing a city-wide conversation on Latino academic achievement. We had begun work, actually by launching a summit on preschool education and bringing together not the usual suspects to talk about that arena of education and then decided a few months later to really look at the theme of Latino student achievement. Sixty percent of our cities’ school age children are Latino and we have a 50% dropout rate and so towards that end, there was a city-wide conversation that was launched approximately two years ago, to focus on this question and it was to draw forward the best practices.

There was, interestingly enough, great resistance when the deal was first posed, that the mayor absolutely took a stand and supported the effort moving forward, in order for us to be able to hold this conversation. Out of that, there were a number of things that emerged, but one of the most important was that in bringing together this cross-section of city leaders, he put a charge out, the mayor put a charge out to everyone who was in attendance and there were over 300 participants at the first convening. He put a challenge out to them and said, “I want you to return in 100 days and share with one another what has changed and what has evolved from this beginning conversation” and, in fact, we hosted a second summit 100 days later, where participants were given an opportunity to voice ideas, actions taken, partnerships formed in the previous 100 days. I had anticipated that from the original over 300 participants that we might get maybe 50-60 coming back. We ended up with over 200, over two-thirds of the participants returning and a wait list of people who had wanted to attend, in order to be able to continue this conversation.

So, this was just one example of how a municipal leader stepped forward, around the issue of education, but also, very importantly, I want to say courageous enough to be able to take on the whole question of race and ethnicity, as it intersects with education and I think that was unique. It was unique for the city. It was a unique role for us to play. It is not that there have not been conversations around Latino education or African-American education, but municipal leadership had never been the point person, or had never been the convener around this very important topic. So, that was just one example of municipal leadership stepping forward and partnering with our local school district of 75,000 students with our superintendent in order to move that conversation forward.

*GRADY:* Thank you, Maria. I wonder if you could just say a quick word about the level of formal authority that Mayor Hickenlooper has in Denver, in terms of, does he have the authority to appoint school board members and what kind of budget control does he have over the school budget?

*LUCERO:* None.

*GRADY:* Okay.

*LUCERO:* But having said that, the superintendent that has been seated for the last 18 months was the mayor's former chief of staff. So, there is an extremely close, healthy, working relationship between the school district leadership and city hall.

*GRADY:* I think we are going to hear a similar theme when Marc talks with us about the Nashville experience as well. Before we get to that, let me just very quickly recap New York. If you have read the report from cover to cover, I imagine that your reaction will be that the New York story is made from a different ball of wax, altogether, and in New York, as you know, Mayor Bloomberg has, for the past four and a half years, had full authority over the schools. He appoints the chancellor. There is no elected school board. He controls the budget. And obviously Mayor Bloomberg was not at the table or leading the charge the same way as some of the other mayors featured in this publication were, but we do want to point out that if you review the chapter you will see that the fundamental restructuring that he directed under the Children First Initiative, which ended up centralizing authority in the school's chancellor and in the mayor's office, really enabled or, at least according to the testimony of those who were interviewed for the case study, it enabled the kind of innovation that this coalition of grassroots parent/community organization led on behalf of what was known as the Community Coalition for District 9 improvement of education in District 9.

What that restructuring did is that it removed several layers of bureaucracy that, in the past, had stymied the kinds of collaboration and community engagement that we read about in this chapter. What happened was that, alarmed by chronic performance and high teacher turnover and a concentration of teachers with very limited experience in their schools, parent community organizations in District 9 in the South Bronx, banded together and formed a coalition, which they called CC9, and then created a collaboration with an unlikely group of characters, an unlikely cast of characters. The grassroots organizations, the United Federation of Teachers, the New York Department of Education and the community involvement program, which at the time was based at New York University and provided technical support and research support for the group, is now part of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. So, this is a nice, unlikely group of bedfellows that came together around this crisis and they designed a program, which they called the Lead Teacher Program.

The Lead Teacher was an individual appointed at each school, who served as a mentor for less experienced colleagues and a coach to more veteran colleagues who could benefit from additional coaching. The point of this, was to reduce the retention, the cycling of staff in and out of these buildings and ultimately to improve instruction and learning in these schools. The success of this approach has recently, within the last year, led the Department of Education to expand the project into Brooklyn, with plans of replicating it beyond that. So that is the New York story and now, Marc Hill, if we can turn this over to you and talk to us about Nashville.

*HILL:* Sure. Looking at the textbook portion about national structure and government structure, because I know folks prefer to be thinking about how can I replicate this in my city or how does this relate to my particular community, it always helps to know from what perspective I am speaking from, so I can share the story with you. In Nashville, we are fortunate, really. In

1963, the city and county merged and became one government. It is the smartest thing that our city's forefathers ever did and so we are a city/county combined government and we have about 570,000 people within the city limits. We are also fortunate that we have one school district within the city. It is through a separate government structure, but it is shared in some ways. What I mean by that is that we have an independently elected board of education of nine, which hires and fires the directors of schools and, of course, the director runs the school system on a day-to-day basis, supported by the government from a policy level and the board does not get into hiring and a lot of the personnel issues, unless there is a dismissal of a tenure teacher. Although the mayor does not run the school system, he has one important point of leverage, and that is the budget. The school board will present a proposed school budget to the mayor. The mayor will then take that recommendation and along with his overall city budget, make a presentation to the city council and then the city council will fulfill that and ultimately adopt the city budget, which will include the school's budget.

However, the mayor and the council do not have line item control. In other words, all the mayor and city council do is that they allocate an overall level of funding. They could take the school board's recommendation as it is, they could lower it or they could raise it, but ultimately, they cannot decide how to spend the funds. The school board has total authority, once they get their allocations, to decide how the funds are spent. That is kind of the funding universe in Nashville, Tennessee. Mayor Purcell, sort of like the Denver story, he ran on an education platform. In fact, it was schools, neighborhoods and public safety, which were the three planks. His prior career was as a state legislator. In fact, he was the House Majority Leader in Tennessee from 1990 to 1996, during which time he sponsored the major Tennessee Education Reform Act, which included implementing value-added testing and Tennessee was one of the first, if not the first, to do that and I know a lot of folks are now looking at that, because it is the growth model for measuring student achievement.

Mayor Purcell was responsible for passing that legislation in the House. So, he had a lot of background, a lot of expertise and a lot of interest in the school system. He had a lot of personal interest in that his only daughter attended public schools, from kindergarten and actually just graduated last May from high school in the Nashville public school system. So, there was a lot of variety of perspectives, not just because it is the most important thing that the city does, not just because more than half the city budget goes to schools, but also from a personal perspective, Mayor Purcell has a huge stake in the success of the school system.

He started to campaign that education is the most important thing. There is a quote off the slide there that comes from the mayor. He started saying that in every city function, any business function, it does not matter if he is talking to the rotary club or the Chamber of Commerce or to a group of school teachers, he always highlighted the fact that education is the most important thing that the city does. In fact, he said it so many times, that an advocate group has now printed bumper stickers that say, "Education is the most important thing that our city does." That is a quote from the mayor. Actually, it is not him on the sticker. It does not say Mayor Purcell on it, but it just says those words and actually it is pretty prevalent. You see them quite a bit in the city. So, that it kind an interesting outcome of the mayor saying, just time after time, no matter what the forum is, reiterating that message.

One of the things that he did to focus on public confidence and participation in the schools - there were three things. One is that he commissioned the performance audit of the school system pretty early on in his administration. He was first elected in 1999. The audit was commissioned in 2000 and then the results came out in January of 2001. It was the first time

ever, an outside look from top to bottom of our school system, how it is doing and also how it is doing in relationship to peer cities. That was a huge tool to not only help get increased funding for the school system. It also gave us a lot of good ideas for improvement and also it helped dispel a lot of prevalent myths in the public about there being too many central office administrators who were just sipping coffee and smoking cigarettes and waiting for the next vacation to roll around. It actually looked at all that and said that we were on target or even a little lean in the area of administration. It looked at our food service. It looked at our transportation system and technology and a whole range of things and it was very helpful in guiding our city to move forward.

The other thing is that he encouraged folks in the community to go visit their local schools, particularly parents and family members that even if you are the minister, and you have a neighborhood school nearby or if you are a businessperson and you wanted to know more about or be interested in your local school, he encouraged everyone to go to the school door and go visit their school. He led by example. He promised to visit every school the first year of his administration. He completed that. There were 127 schools at that time, so he had to get on it and knock out 5-6 in a day, but he did it. And they were not brief stops, he really did go into every library and every kitchen and just above every classroom and talk to teachers and students and principals about what the issues were and he saw for himself, obviously. He has continued to do that. It was not just a one time thing or just fulfilling a campaign pledge. He has gone back around. He has now visited every school at least twice, most at least three times, and as of this week, actually as of today, he visited a school this morning. He has made 483 school visits in Nashville and he just keeps on going.

So, that is important for a number of reasons. One is that he felt that because he was focusing on education, he needed to know first hand how things were. The other thing that he felt was important was that people in the city knew that their mayor cared and was that interested in education. So, the investment of time and the investment of energy, I think, speaks volumes to focus the community about the importance of education.

The other thing that he did, sort of a big public engagement activity, was making a celebration of the first day of school. It is not our idea or a new idea. In fact, there is a First Day Foundation in Vermont. It can be looked up on the web. Its sole mission is to promote this in communities and the idea is that education is the most important thing that a city does and that first day of school is the most important day on the city's civic calendar and that everybody ought to get involved from the very beginning. You ought not to wait until the first parent/teacher conference day in October to get involved in your child's school. You ought to show up on the first day, meet the teacher, meet the principal and start that relationship from day one and also part of the agenda was, or the intention of this from the mayor's viewpoint, is that he wanted people to actually get in the schools and see how they worked and if they weren't good, if the facility's roof was leaking or if the instruction was not up to par, we wanted to know that early on to and that those parents and key members would then be in a position to communicate that to principals, administrators, ultimately the director of schools and the school boards if they needed to. They started on that, showed up and were accounted for from the very beginning and that you would build that relationship then throughout the year. So, those are kind of the three big areas of public engagement that Mayor Purcell has done in Nashville and I would be pleased to answer questions once Mike is done running through all the case studies.

*GRADY:* Marc, we actually had the privilege of hosting Mayor Purcell at our emerging knowledge forum, which is our annual meeting, last spring, and if you have ever had the pleasure of meeting or hearing him, I think that you would all be impressed that Mayor Bill Purcell is really one of the most articulate and powerful voices on behalf of public education today. Also, an interview, this is a pitch, an interview with the mayor will appear in the next issue of the Annenberg Institute's Voices in Urban Education, which is our quarterly publication that will be out next month, I believe.

Before we get into the Q & A portion of this, let me just touch on what we found to be common themes or elements that cut across these five cities and I should say that once we sign off here, we will be sure that the complete selection of slides is pulled together and it will be available on our website and we will make it easy for you to find once you get onto [www.annenberginstitute.org](http://www.annenberginstitute.org).

The first element that I would like to point out is just really the cross-sector nature of so many of these collaborations, these partnerships that you see here at the local level and one of the really unique strengths of mayors that they bring to this is the power of their office, of their invitation. Regardless of whether it is a strong mayor or a weak mayor as it relates to education, it is still a very tough invitation to turn down when the mayor calls and asks you to be part of the task force, as part of a local effort to build public will on behalf of schools. We saw that in Akron. You have heard Marc describe it. You have heard Maria describe it in Denver. Marc described it in Nashville, and in Akron, Mayor Plusquellic was able to pull together a very powerful business coalition, joining with the faith community and social service agencies. Some of those agencies report directly to his office and begins marketable resource for these community learning centers.

The second point is a strategic use of data. We see this across the five cities. The data was important in all of these stories for a couple of reasons. One is that it really helped to characterize or substantiate the crisis. The data made the case to address a problem. Once the crisis was established and then the program was in place, then data was continued to be used to monitor implementation and the affects of the program. We looked at the work in New York and the positive effects that they found in their evaluation of the lead teacher program and this has really persuaded the school department to replicate this program in other parts of the city. The second is this laser focus on student outcomes and student success, and we see this particularly in Long Beach and New York and in other cities. It really helped the New York case, especially when the going got tough and we will be talking a little bit more about this in the Q & A portion of our discussion, that this implementation is not clean and linear, that you really hit bumps along the way and you suffer setbacks and as you are encountering these setbacks, what was key, was that the parties who were at the table continued to remind each other, why they were in this - - to create more promising, positive futures for the young people who attended schools.

In the case of New York, frankly it was more powerful to hear that coming from parents and community partners than it might have been from professional educators or other agencies. The final point is what I call an authentic engagement of partner organizations in really authorizing partners to make decisions and lead. It is really the opposite of a token appointment to the board and the bodies, but rather sharing power with partners, community partners and parent organization partners around the real decisions regarding programming, regarding the distribution of financial resources and human resources, as we saw in New York. Marc and Maria, before we turn to the questions, is there anything that you would like to add to these cross-cutting themes?

*LUCERO:* I think that its laced all the way through this, the “walking the talk” sense that whether it is Mayor Purcell of Nashville saying, “I will visit schools. I will visit every single one of them” or leadership in the Long Beach saying, “we are going to tackle this and we are going to make this continuum a real one.” I mean, what I gained as I read through each one of those case studies is that municipal leadership voiced their commitment and then took action and in that process, it was sustained. It was not just today, for this election, for this month, but it was sustained involvement.

*HILL:* Good point, Maria.

*GRADY:* As we turn to a few of the questions, I would invite those in the audience to submit questions using the Live Meeting software, but why don’t we start at the beginning, which is in some ways, the most frequent question I get asked by city officials or organizations that are interested in taking on this issue of creating public will and support for schools is, “Where do we start?” And this is especially, I think, prevalent in cities that feel as though they are sort of under siege or in crisis, for whatever reasons, political reasons, reasons of leadership turnover. They are feeling paralyzed – where there is no obvious platform and no obvious leader to step forward. What were the first steps that your city took in order to engage greater public will and support for the schools? Marc, would you like to start with that one?

*HILL:* Sure, from our perspective, I think you have to lead by example, before you can really bring together the power of community, which the mayors and city halls have, you have to have sort of been there to some extent and be able to speak from a position of credibility and first-hand knowledge. So, I think that, you know, for a mayor or city councilmember or city manager to visit schools, starting out, would be a huge way to build up that - to get that kind of invitation power later down the road when it is time to bring folks together and to lead. I think it enables you to listen and feel what the issues are at first and enables you to see what the landscape is and people respond to that and they respect that, when someone takes the time to learn about that venue or the area of services before you speak out about it or start to try to lead in a very public way.

So, that is what Mayor Purcell did here in Nashville and I would highly recommend to other city leaders thinking about how to engage the public around education. How do I engage the public education system, is to try to do that and on the other side, sort of, you are not necessarily working for a mayor, but you are trying to figure out how to bring it to the region. Issue the invitation to do that. There are very different strides you can use to go about doing that in a tactful and productive way, but thinking of ways to get your cities leaders into the schools, is the simplest way to start.

*LUCERO:* Marc, if I can just underscore what you just said, I think it is something that both Mayor Purcell and Mayor Hickenlooper have in common is that visiting of schools and yesterday, there was - the mayor goes to a school every week for an hour and a half – yesterday, was our 110<sup>th</sup> school visit and I was feeling pretty proud about that until I heard Mayor Purcell’s number of 483. So, I am humbled by that.

*HILL:* I am not suggesting that is the only route to that, but I think - and you do not have to necessarily do them all, I mean there are variations based on the needs of your mayor and your community, wherever it might be, but I think you have to invest some time and energy in getting to know that. So, I think that you are right, Maria.

*GRADY:* Marc, did he visit his daughter's school 200 times of the 483?

*HILL:* Well, you know, he did not count those, unless he was there in an official capacity as part of program or something. He took his daughter to school, and his role in sort of the family structure was to take his daughter to school each morning, throughout her career, with the exception of him being out of town or some other commitment, he did that. So, no, we did not count that. Those were not official visits. They were him being a parent.

*GRADY:* Let's talk, and I foreshadowed this a little bit earlier, let's talk about the setbacks and the need to be resilient, and in this for the long haul. In some ways, you really do have to have the stomach for dealing with challenges and occasionally with disappointments. Describe some of the pitfalls or challenges, Maria, let's start with you, that Mayor Hickenlooper encountered in his efforts and then Marc, we will ask you to reflect a little bit about Mayor Purcell's experience.

*LUCERO:* Well, when I hear that question I am actually sitting here with a smile on my face, because when I think of Mayor Hickenlooper, he, unlike many of the other municipal leaders, had never run for elected office. He was a restaurant owner. He made beer. That is what this man did and he jokes often that he had never even run for dog catcher. So, he came in and he had what some call a non-political type of frame of reference. So, examples of this, and I share them, because I think, one of the challenges is to think in an innovative way. To think not about what is most popular, but what is the right thing to do. So, right from the very beginning, Mayor Hickenlooper was elected and he had this inauguration celebration. All of the dollars that were raised in that opening celebration, weekend ceremony, those dollars, typically, would have gone back into his campaign fund for a future re-election that he would be running. Well, he donated all of those dollars raised, to the Denver public schools to help support afterschool programming and he was advised not to do that and he said, "But that is the right thing to do." I mean, so that was one example and I think one of the challenges is how to do what is right versus what is popular.

Within his first three months, in his position as mayor, which was three years ago, there was an election coming up and there was an issue on the ballot before the voters to raise a bond and a tax issue to raise dollars for the schools and he came out and publicly campaigned, every single day, half a dozen times a day, for those tax issues, and again, he was advised not to do that. He was told, "New mayors do not go out and campaign to raise taxes for education. Plus, you have no purview over the schools, why would you do this?" And he said, "Because it is the right thing to do." So, I guess those to me are true examples of doing things differently and being guided by a different set of principles when it comes to defining the role of leadership in a city.

*HILL:* That is a great example, Maria, and "wow" what in Denver they will do with their teachers. It is innovative and fascinating and a lot of us can learn from what you are doing and

are anxious to see how that goes. In Nashville, you know, mayors did not traditionally get involved in schools and education. I think it was largely because they did not control the school system. I think that has turned around now and we are seeing more and more mayors say, "I may not be able to control the schools, but ultimately, the success of our city is going to hinge on the success of our education system and our kids, and I don't have any choice as mayor." In other words, I hope that far more they realize it is the right thing to do and that education is deserving of their time and attention and from a self interest perspective, that mayors have to be involved in education in school, but you do not control the school system, by and large, so you are going to be disappointed from time to time. There are going to be times where you are going to face a defeat or things will not go the way that you want or during those times, and we have had a couple in Nashville, during those times you have to keep your eye on the ball and the fact that you have to stay the course, because you really do not have any other choice. You have to do that. That can be a challenge from time to time.

One of the things that we said here in Nashville, we only have two ways of increasing resources for schools, and that is either through property tax or our local option sales tax. There is no income tax in Tennessee, and so Mayor Purcell has raised property taxes now twice and a significant portion of that is going to education. The most recent time, in 2005, just last year actually, he also proposed a ½ cent sales tax increase on our local option sales tax, by referendum, which is the only way we can do that and that was going to be devoted towards schools and senior tax relief and, unfortunately, despite his campaign efforts, unlike in Denver, we were not able to get that passed and that was a disappointment. It would have comfortably funded our school system for the future, for future years. We were already taken care of in the present year, but that did not happen and the way we read it, it was not that people in Nashville did not value education anymore, that they did not believe that the schools system could make it; they were just opposed to that particular mechanism for doing it. In Tennessee, of course, we have what some might consider an astronomical sales tax rate. It is 9% now. So, there are a lot of issues behind that, so it is a disappointment and we are just going to have to learn from that and come together and try again in other ways. So, you have to acknowledge that that is going to happen from time to time. That despite your best efforts, you do not control everything, but ultimately if you build a consensus beforehand and during the process, you will be strong enough, I think, to weather those kinds of storms.

*GRADY:* Thanks, Marc. I actually want to turn to a couple of questions in the queue right now. Marc, in particular, I would like for you to comment on, as something we have not talked about yet and that is the role of the media. What role the media can play in educating a community in sort of the preface to that question is that, the questioner says that, "I am sure that there were reluctant community members to change the typical functions of the school system itself. What role, if any, did the media play in educating the community? Maria, would you like to take that?"

*LUCERO:* Certainly. I previously mentioned the school district's 50% dropout rate and there are many myths and questions and inquiries in what needs to be done and what should be done and who should be to blame, when you look at those educational statistics. The media played, I believe, a very instrumental role a year ago. Actually, 18 months ago. They decided at the beginning of the school year in 05-06 to do a very long series on one of our local high schools. 800 freshman begin the school year as 9<sup>th</sup> graders and four years later, 300 graduate. The

question is what happens to those other 500 high school students. Well, one of our major dailies, decided to cover this and to dedicate nine months of print time to this issue and there was a reporter that was placed inside that high school for nine months, and every single week, we, as readers received stories about the inside workings of this high school and what was tremendous was that a local university partnered with the media and ran all kinds of statistics and research on the numbers themselves, in tracking students and just the exposure that was done in a very humane way of the trials and tribulations of education, was very enlightening. I think it helped dispel myths. For many, it helped educate them on the complexity of our educational system and also on the trauma and the tragedy of this. So, that, to me, was one example where the media played both an educational, informing role that really touched hundreds of thousands of readers over the course of a school year.

*GRADY:* Marc, any incites on the role of the media?

*HILL:* Yeah. Part of our first day of school parent/community engagement strategies is to hold a first day festival, which is a big celebration in downtown Nashville to kick off the new school year and it has grown over the past seven years to where we now draw about 20,000 people downtown on a Sunday afternoon to celebrate education and school starts the next day on Monday. That has helped drive the message of “We want you in our schools- parents, community members.” Because it has become so big, that now every media outlet in town does a lot of coverage on it. Every radio station does remotes from the site and all the TV stations are there and all the print, of course. That is a huge boon to getting the message out that education is the most important thing and that we are all together about it in Nashville and that we want people to visit the schools the next day on Monday. So, you know, having that huge public event really helped bring the media around. That idea has helped to broadcast that message that they might not otherwise get.

The other, I think, major time that our newspaper was really helpful, that I can think of off the top of my head, in the past 5-6 years, was when we had a performance audit. They did a great series on the results. They sort of took a week and each day, looked in depth at the different issues covered in the audit, which was great. You know, it helped. A lot of times it depends on the editor or the publisher, but if you have got a great education reporter, who is sort of internally motivated to get those kinds of stories out, obviously, that is huge and we had that kind of person here until recently. So, we were lucky. I do not know how you control that. I think your mayor and your superintendent and it happened in Nashville, you go and do editorial board meetings from time to time, and we were able to communicate. That is helpful.

*GRADY:* We are coming on the top of the hour here and I am going to suggest - it looks like we have about 6-7 questions in the queue. I am going to suggest that the questioners, that we should invite them to send those questions to me directly. You have my e-mail address and then I will forward them on to Marc and Maria; some of them are directed to them, in particular. I am sorry that we could not get to all of the questions today. But one of them touches on one of the questions that I think we began to reflect on a little bit earlier and that is the really significant investment, the huge investment of both political and financial resources that your mayors and your cities have made in education. And this is two parts, if you could just say a word about what the payoff has been. What has happened in the outcome to that investment after 3-5 years and then the question that has sustained this progress? Mayor Purcell is not running for re-

election next year. He will turn the reigns over to another leader. Maria, Mayor Hickenlooper is not in office forever. Have you begun thinking about sort of a legacy strategy, a successful strategy for the important gains that he has put in place? Marc, we will start with you.

*HILL:* Right. I think what we hopefully have done is that we have sort of routinized the fact that parents are going to show up on the first day of school and get involved, that they are not going to need an invitation from the mayor, two years from now, to do that. They are going to do that because that is what we do in Nashville. That has now been broadcast so often and so repeatedly, that I am hoping that has now become part of the culture in Nashville, Tennessee. You know, there may or may not be a first day festival in 2008. That will be an interesting issue for us if we decide to keep doing that and who does it, but again, a lot of it will play out on what is the expectation of the community. Do they demand it? Do they expect it? I think in Nashville, the answer will likely be, yes.

*LUCERO:* And in Denver, Mayor Hickenlooper is running for re-election. I think that he will be in office for a number of more years and with a 95% approval rating, it seems to be leading a charge based on the statement that a great city is built on great schools and he takes that very seriously. I think in his first three years, he has been extremely successful in bringing additional funding to schools and those are funding streams supported by the voters that will continue for a minimum of 10 years. This fall, he takes to the voters a ballot initiative to support preschool funding. A 12 cent tax on a \$100 purchase would provide an additional 12 million dollars to preschool programs in the City of Denver. It would double the number of children that would have access to quality preschool. If it passes, that would also have a life span of 10 years and to me, putting these structures in place, well beyond his tenure as a municipal leader and, again, like Mayor Purcell's track record, the definition of a large city mayor now absolutely includes being a champion for your public schools.

*GRADY:* By my clock, we are now at the top of the hour. It is 5:00 Eastern time and I want to close by thanking Maria Guajardo Lucero of the City of Denver and Marc Hill from Nashville, Tennessee. I also want to thank the audience and thank the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families that has supported this seminar. Good evening, everyone.